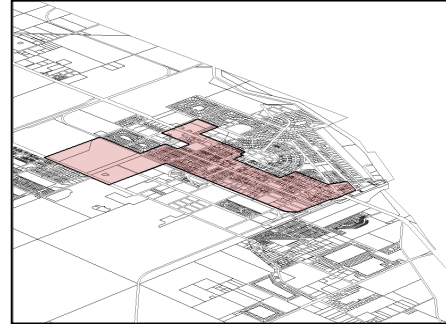


Chapter 2: *Plan Development*

Figure 2.1
Clewiston CRA



“Unfocused planning and laissez faire attitudes between growing communities and land developers resulted in the chaotic situation that we now call sprawl.”

Introduction:

Commerce in American cities has been stressed since shopping malls became serious competitors for the downtown business client in the 1960's and 70's. Retail businesses have particularly suffered from changing retail patterns and shopping habits. Many retailers migrated from the central business districts of American cities to regional shopping malls in order to remain competitive. Downtowns started to decay because it is cheaper to develop properties on the greenfields at the urban fringe than to bear the cost of demolition and property cleanup in the central business district. Residential, commercial and industrial developers were lured to rural locations by cheap land with less regulation and oversight than similar locations within the city.

Facing a dwindling tax base and urban decay fueled by the flight of residents and businesses to the urban fringe, cities must look at some critical questions:

- Do we give up on the city core and continue to annex the rural fringe, accepting the burden of expensive utilities and decaying inner city infrastructure, or redevelop the city core as compact and efficient mixed uses?
- Should businesses within a central business district of a community compete directly against major retailers such as Wal-Mart, or factory outlet centers?
- Should the Central Business District (CBD) evolve into a new kind of retail center with businesses that don't compete directly with the “Big Box” retailer, but complement them?
- Should the CBD abandon retail and become a service center relying on office space, financial and government functions for viability.

- Does a city really need a downtown and what is the true function of a downtown?
- Should residential uses change or do current planning and zoning regulations adequately address the health, safety and welfare of the community?

As early as 2003, civic officials noticed the core area of Clewiston was beginning to show signs of deterioration and that existing buildings were aging and coming to the end of their commercial viability. In addition, the commercial RV/trailer parks were populated with aged trailers which do not meet current construction standards for recreational vehicles or mobile homes.

In Florida, successful CRAs located in 140 communities such as Boynton Beach, Fort Lauderdale, Largo, or West Palm Beach offered a model for successful redevelopment efforts. By 2004, the conditions were deemed bad enough to create a condition of “slum and blight” as defined under Florida Statute 163. These conditions include but are not limited to: the presence of substandard or inadequate structures, a shortage of affordable housing, inadequate infrastructure, insufficient roadways, and inadequate parking.

Under Florida law (Chapter 163, Part III), local governments are able to designate areas as Community Redevelopment Areas when conditions of slum and blight exist. Since all the monies used in financing CRA activities are locally generated, CRAs are not overseen by the state but redevelopment plans must be consistent with local government comprehensive plans. To document that the required conditions exist, the local government must survey the proposed redevelopment area and prepare a “Finding of Necessity.” If the Finding of Necessity determines the required conditions exist, the local government may create a Community Redevelopment Area to provide the tools needed to foster and support redevelopment of the targeted area.

In 2004, the City produced a finding of slum and blight, and in 2005 passed an ordinance creating the Clewiston Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). The CRA was structured with the City Commission sitting as the CRA and a CRA Advisory Board advising the City Commission on issues within the Community Redevelopment Area. The hurricane season of 2005 temporarily postponed the development of the CRA plan as federal, state and local officials became occupied with disaster relief efforts in and around Clewiston. Some disaster relief efforts have created additional issues within the CRA.

In 2006, the City of Clewiston issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the creation of a Community Redevelopment Plan (CRP). The City wished to draw on the expertise of consultants in the fields of real estate and urban design, and include participation from elected officials, local government staff, the business community, homeowners, and interested citizens. The successful company was MJA Consulting LLC of Lakeland, Florida.

The process to create the Community Redevelopment Plan was conducted in three phases.

Phase I: Stakeholder's Meeting

Phase I was research-oriented. It concentrated on gathering data and creating usable information, which was utilized to identify redevelopment issues facing the CRA and establishing the base of knowledge for the creation of a CRA vision. The Consultants engaged stakeholders in reaching consensus on future redevelopment opportunities through a visioning workshop held at the Clewiston Country Club on February 23, 2007. Twenty-six community stakeholders attended this meeting. This was followed up with several scheduled personal interviews and informal street interviews performed while walking and driving through the city on information gathering sessions.

Figure 2.2
Stakeholder's Meeting



Phase II: Public Visioning Workshop

The second phase followed with a public visioning workshop/charette that focused on the policies and strategies. This event was held at the John Boy Auditorium on March 22, 2007. Presentations were made to the Rotary Club of Clewiston and the Lions Club of Clewiston, where questionnaires were distributed and data collected.

The data collected in Phase I and Phase II were analyzed and turned into useable knowledge, which became the framework of the Clewiston Community Redevelopment Plan.

Figure 2.3
Visioning Workshop



Phase III: Public Consensus Meeting

In Phase III, The final elements of the CRP were presented to the community for consensus and refinement at a public meeting and the final presentation to the Clewiston City Commission on May 10, 2007.

Figure 2.4
Consensus Meeting



Figure 2.5
The Three-Phase CRP Development Process

Phase 1	Phase II	Phase III
<i>Redevelopment issues for the Clewiston CRA</i>	<i>Opportunity analysis and visioning workshop/charette</i>	<i>Draft Community Redevelopment Plan</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background data analysis • Goals and objective hypothesis development • Redevelopment research and opportunity identification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Input • Economic programming • Real estate factors • Urban Design and regulatory Tools • Spatial Analysis • Community Input • Strategies and Policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals, issues, strategies and implementation Actions • Draft and complete Plan

Phase I

In phase I of the redevelopment study, a group of 26 stakeholders with members of local governments and the business community worked with the consulting team to identify issues dealing with the Finding of Blight within the CRA and to create a set of strategies for addressing them. The group was given a quality of life questionnaire, a visioning questionnaire and a workbook that addressed the specific findings of slum and blight.

It was determined that to achieve a vision for the future of the CRA, bold leadership would be required from elected officials and the civil services, with strong assistance from public agencies, and cooperation and active participation of the private sector. The long-term commitment of political, financial and technical resources from all those engaged in redevelopment process will be vital to its success.

Phase I: Conclusions and Recommended Actions

The Principal conclusions of Phase I:

- Clewiston has existing infrastructure and it would be wasteful to discard this infrastructure and pay again for new infrastructure at the city's edge that duplicates what already exists.
- Redevelopment is both necessary and inevitable.
- Redevelopment requires a community focus and joint vision.
- Redevelopment requires new tools and approaches like tax increment financing.
- Redevelopment requires a continuous, long-term public and private commitment of resources. This may require the support and development of programs like Main Street, Downtown Development or other programs established by local government and local merchants.
- Clewiston's **strengths** are perceived to be: strong, efficient and effective municipal leadership; a strong sense of community; a high quality of life due to location; infrastructure; and recreational opportunities.
- Clewiston's **weaknesses** are perceived to be: lack of retail and restaurant choices, dangerous transport traffic, lack of appropriate educational facilities, unfriendly streetscape, need for community policing and code enforcement, need for appropriate housing, and conditions of slum and blight.

- Clewiston's **opportunities** are perceived to be: light industry that provides a living wage, more and varied housing options, festival and event development, the creation of a vibrant downtown with programming that goes on into the evening.
- National and statewide **trends** which will support the CRA are:
 - The expansion of grassroots revitalization movement in American.
 - Dropping crime rates in the inner cities throughout the U.S.
 - Rebirth of functioning private markets in former run-down areas. New businesses deliberating seeking out older central neighborhoods for their low-cost, available labor and architectural interest.
 - Massive changes in government services over the last 20 years including the welfare system, the public housing system and school system.

The Principal Recommendations of Phase I:

- Support the vision of a strong CRA with a strong downtown merchants' association such as a BID, DDA or a Main Street Program.
- Support the development of the CRA with a clear framework for intergovernmental coordination for code enforcement, education and business development projects.
- Work with stakeholders to develop programs for community education and communications.
- Utilize public/private investment techniques.

A quality of life questionnaire was distributed to visioning workshop members and showed that:

- Economic opportunities, including opportunities to operate a business or find employment, are better than in the past.
- Local government utilities, including drinking water, wastewater, drainage and other government operated utilities, are better than in the past.
- Growth management, including the availability of urban suburban and rural lifestyle options, resource management and public participation, are better than in the past.

- Public parks and recreation, including all forms of outdoor public recreation opportunities and facilities, are better than in the past.
- Affordable housing, including rental and home opportunities, are worse than in the past.
- More attention needs to be focused on economic opportunities, housing opportunities and healthcare.

Phase II

With the groundwork laid by Phase I, the next step was to begin the Community Redevelopment Plan development process. Based on research and public involvement, three major points of focus were determined:

1. Economic opportunity, concentrating on attracting and retaining high-wage target industries such as healthcare.
2. Real estate factors, emphasizing the need for assembling and entitling sufficient and appropriate land to allow redevelopment and regulatory tools.
3. Urban design, providing the blueprint needed to reshape the urban environment.

The planning framework created by this three-point approach will help achieve the vision and increase the quality of life within and without the bounds of the Clewiston CRA.

Phase II: Visioning Workshop/Charette

On March 22, 2007 participants gathered in the Beardsley Room of the John Boy Auditorium, 120 W.C. Owen Road Clewiston, Florida, kicking off a specialized public involvement process. The visioning workshop/ charette used a variety of techniques such as technical presentations, personal interviews, group work sessions, visual preference surveys, questionnaires and brainstorming sessions.

Conclusions and recommendations of the Visioning Workshop/Charette:

- Clewiston should develop a tourism vision supported with unique displays of civic art, festivals, events, signage, retail opportunities, and attractive streetscaping.
- Current businesses should be supported and encouraged, including the new mattress factory, medical facilities, educational facilities and ancillary businesses such as day care and specialized retail.

- Businesses which can use Clewiston's central location as a staging area should be sought out, such as building materials.
- Streetscaping of Ventura Avenue to make it the center point of the Downtown, including reclaiming Ventura Ave from Olympia to Gloria as part of a new medical facility and rezoning of portions of Ventura Ave for mixed use development.

Phase II: Conclusions and Recommended Actions

Overall

- It will be important to obtain formal commitment to the plan from stakeholders such as citizens and community groups, commercial and industrial business and government agencies. This must be sustained through a strong communications program.

Within the Economic Opportunities Issues category, the public recommended that the CRA should:

- Use business incentives to attract target employers to locate within the CRA.
- Create new high-wage jobs through promotion of entrepreneurial activities through the creation of a business incubator sponsored by the CRA.
- Develop guidelines for granting incentives to target employees when they relocate to the CRA.
- An emphasis on retaining and growing our existing employers, including smaller businesses and those with lower wage jobs.
- Education and training of the workforce are critical.
- Adequate infrastructure to support redevelopment is vital.
- If incentives are to be given to businesses, accountability and oversight must be maintained.

Within the Real Estate issues category, the public recommended that the CRA should:

- Develop programs to help developers by land assembly.
- Incorporate housing initiatives within mixed use plans.

- Work with the city and county to streamline entitlement process within the CRA.
- Rehabilitation of existing uses, not just replacement should be encouraged.
- Planning efforts should be mindful of the needs of ordinary citizens: mobile home park residents, the elderly and disabled, small business owners, and others who perceive that they might be displaced by redevelopment.

Within the Urban Design and regulatory code issues category, the public recommended that the CRA should:

- Work with the city and county to revise land development regulations.
- Develop a business incentive program.
- Offer higher densities and mixed uses in the CRA.
- Create incentives, techniques and model designs to encourage preferred urban forms within future redevelopments.

Phase III

Based on the information gathered during Phase II along with additional spatial analysis, a formal set of goals, issues and strategies was drafted. There is general agreement that change is inevitable, redevelopment is inevitable for positive change, redevelopment is best when planned for, and redevelopment has a great potential to preserve and enhance the heart of Clewiston in the CRA.

The final set of goals, issues and strategies were presented to the City Commission sitting as the CRA for their review. At the following posted and notified public City Commission meeting, the finalized version was presented. The final plan will be forwarded to the taxing entities including the State, County and School Board.

Phase III: Conclusions and Recommendations

In addition to affirming the conclusions reached at earlier meetings, the participants provided feedback on particular topics to make the plan more effective in meeting the CRA goals:

- Goal 1:** Through the active use of personal petition, multimedia materials and the Internet, the CRA will boost the participation, cooperation, and support of the people engaged in and affected by the Clewiston Community Redevelopment Area.

- Goal 2:** Within the first 24 months the CRA will create a program to attraction, retention, and expansion of businesses that provide high-wage jobs that are very important for the continued economic health of Clewiston.
- Goal 3:** To mitigate cost differentials between redevelopment projects and green-field developments that negatively affect redevelopment opportunities and the ability to retain and attract high-wage jobs.
- Goal 4:** Within 5 years, the CRA will bolster investment and reinvestment in economic development, redevelopment and business incentives, and public/ private partnerships that are required to meet CRA redevelopment goals.
- Goal 5:** Within 10 years, the CRA will begin to mitigate greyfield (and brownfield) sites for redevelopment opportunities making available tracts of land that are of the proper size, have adequate infrastructure capacity, and have known development entitlements in order to facilitate the expansion and attraction of target employers.
- Goal 6:** Within 12 months, the CRA will begin to act to fulfill the vision of the community for the CRA. The Community recognizes that without the proper planning sustainable development may not occur or will occur in an ad hoc, random fashion. The CRA will facilitate enhanced community design, an important and legitimate objective of redevelopment activities, because how a community looks, feels, and functions largely depends on how it is designed.
- Goal 7:** Within 5 years, the CRA will promote the integration of pedestrian traffic with vehicular traffic.
- Goal 8:** To promote the CRA as a focal point of the community and to maintain a setting whereby services for people to live workshop and to be entertained without leaving the city can be provided.
- Goal 9:** Within 24 months, the CRA will take advantage of innovative planning and financing opportunities to meet economic development and redevelopment objectives.

The Community Redevelopment Plan

Based on the information gathering during Phases I, II, and III, the Community Redevelopment Plan was drafted and organized into the following Chapters:

- Chapter 1: Executive Summary
- Chapter 2: Plan Development
- Chapter 3: Plan Framework
- Chapter 4 Economic Opportunities
- Chapter 5 Real Estate Factors
- Chapter 6: Regulatory tools and urban design
- Chapter 7: Strategies and Implementation

Obtaining approval of the plan, while a crucial first step, is only the beginning of the process. Implementation and monitoring of the plan will be ongoing. This means the strategies and implementation actions contained in Chapter 7 will need to be integrated into policies and procedures of local government.

Conclusions

To achieve the vision for the Clewiston CRA, leadership will be required from elected officials, with the strong support of the public and with cooperation and assistance of the private sector and public agencies. The long-term commitment of political, financial and technical resources from all those engaged in the redevelopment process will be vital to its success.

Based on research and public involvement, three major points of focus were agreed upon:

1. Economic Opportunities, concentrating on creating and retaining high wage target businesses.
2. Real Estate Factors, emphasizing the need for sufficient and appropriate land to allow efficient redevelopment.
3. Urban Design will provide the blueprint needed to shape the urban environment.